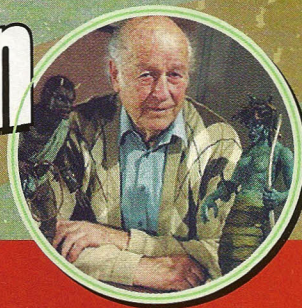


The magic of Ray Harryhausen



STACK salutes the father of stop-motion animation and screen visual effects. Cinema would be much poorer without his fantastic contributions.

When you think of stop-motion animation there are two names that instantly come to mind: the great Willis O'Brien who brought *King Kong* to life in 1933, and his spiritual successor Ray Harryhausen.

Harryhausen was born in Los Angeles in 1920 and as a young man became hypnotised by the giant gorilla on Skull Island, developing a penchant for special effects on the big screen.

This infatuation drove Harryhausen to experiment in the production of short animated films, that ultimately led to his first job with Paramount working

on George Pal's Puppatoons. During the war he found employment with the Army Motion Picture Unit, educating soldiers on the use of equipment through animated sequences.

At the war's conclusion, Harryhausen presented Willis O'Brien with a demo reel and was hired as an assistant animator on *Mighty Joe Young* (1949). With the experience gained from working with the pioneer of model animation, the young filmmaker struck up a friendship with writer and long-term collaborator Ray Bradbury, creating *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* in 1953. For the next three

decades, Harryhausen and Bradbury enthralled moviegoers the world over with their unique brand of fantasy storytelling, breathing life into dozens of latex mythical creatures.

Ray Harryhausen completed his last film, *Clash of the Titans* in 1982. Technical advancement in film effects had since dated the art of stop-motion animation. In 1992, Harryhausen was finally commended for his superb contribution to the world of cinema when he was presented with the Golden Sawyer Lifetime Achievement Academy Award in 1992.

Two of Ray Harryhausen's biggest fans work in the STACK office. Editor Scott Hocking and Games Editor Paul Jones both had imaginative childhoods inspired in part by the magic crafted in Harryhausen's movies. The following six films are their personal favourites from the master's body of work.

Paul Jones

The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958)

This is the first Harryhausen movie that I can recall. Although released a lifetime before I stepped foot on this earth, this and many other of the maestro's movies formed an integral part of my movie apprenticeship.

Kerwin Mathews plays a very conservative '50's swashbuckling Sinbad in a fabulous tale bearing little resemblance to the ancient Arabic tale. Set to a monumental score by Bernard Hermann, this was the first feature film using stop-motion animation to be shot entirely in colour. Harryhausen took eleven months to painstakingly animate the creatures in the movie, including a Cyclops, a giant two-headed bird and a fire-breathing dragon. The film featured a single animated skeleton – a prelude to the seminal scene in *Jason and the Argonauts*.

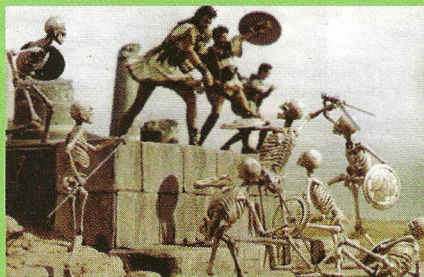
KEY SCENE: When one of Sinbad's sailors is trapped by the Cyclops and placed on a spit to be gently barbecued over an open fire. Fantastic stuff!



Jason and the Argonauts (1963)

My personal favourite Harryhausen venture is where the stop-motion master visits the realm of Ancient Greek mythology for the first time. A voyage of wonder is undertaken by the venerable Jason to find the mythical Golden Fleece and its magical healing powers. Once discovered, only then can he take his rightful place on the throne of Thessaly. Along the way, Jason is confronted by the 100 foot bronze Talos, the seven headed Hydra, a centaur and of course, those skeletons.

KEY SCENE: "Rise up you dead, slain of the Hydra." These immortal words are uttered by Aeetes as a skeleton army rises from the earth before Jason and his surviving men. The incredible sword fighting scenes that follows was the product of four and a half gruelling months of animation for a mere four minutes of onscreen time. 45 years later and the sequence is still mesmerising.

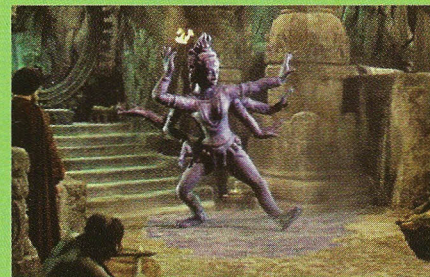


The Golden Voyage of Sinbad (1974)

The last decent Sinbad movie in the series – and an unashamed showcase for Ray Harryhausen's creature creations – starred future *Doctor Who*, Tom Baker, as the evil magician Koura.

Returning from a voyage, the intrepid sailor intercepts a golden tablet belonging to Koura. Not good. Regular Playboy Mansion resident John Philip Law sharpens more than his charm in his role as Sinbad, fighting a one-eyed centaur, the figurehead of his own ship and the Goddess Kali. Improving his animation techniques, Harryhausen near-perfected the contrast between the rear projected live-action and his stop-motion footage. *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* signalled the beginning of the end for Harryhausen. Ideas were becoming scarce, a fact made glaringly obvious in his final two films, *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* and *Clash of the Titans*.

KEY SCENE: The dance of the six armed Kali remains one of the most memorable moments in Harryhausen's long and distinguished career.



Harryhausen Filmography

Scott Hocking

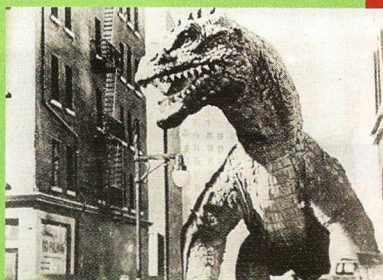
The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms (1953)

Back when I was an impressionable 5-year-old, discovering Harryhausen's black and white dinosaur classic late one night on the ABC (when I should have been in bed) cemented it as my all-time fave from the monster maker's impressive body of work.

Call it nostalgia, but who needs *Jurassic Park* and CGI when you've got an angry stop-motion rhedosaurus stomping toy cars and reducing miniature sets to rubble on a rampage through New York City, after being woken by atomic testing in the Arctic.

One of Harryhausen's finest beasts actually began life as a Ray Bradbury short story for *The Saturday Evening Post*.

KEY SCENE: Retained from Bradbury's story is an impressive sequence where the Beast attacks a lighthouse, nicely rendered in fog and shadow.



20 Million Miles to Earth (1957)

Harryhausen's critters often possessed the unique ability to evince sympathy from the viewer (like the aforementioned *Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*), even if they did eat people and trash major landmarks. Consider the plight of the Ymir, a creature from Venus that washes up on an Italian shore, grows at an accelerated rate and winds up wrecking the Coliseum. The army triumph, but we feel bad about it.

This pre-Sinbad monster movie is a showcase for one the master's most beloved beasts.

KEY SCENE: The Ymir's fight with an elephant on the streets of Rome.



Valley of the Gwangi (1957)

Cowboys versus dinosaurs in a Forbidden Valley in Mexico. But it ain't just dinos on the Harryhausen drawing board, there's also a tiny prehistoric horse and a circus elephant (the same one from *20 Million Miles* perhaps?) for the eponymous tyrannosaur to chomp on during the thrilling finale. A Saturday matinee favourite at the cinema, back in the days when DVDs were still something from a science fiction film.

KEY SCENE: Gwangi versus a styracosaur – guess who wins? However credit is also due to the circus rider who plunges – while still astride her horse! – 50 metres into a drum of water as part of the show. Crazy.



- (1942) - **How to Bridge a Gorge** (producer)
- (1942) - **Tulips Shall Grow** (chief animator)
- (1946) - **Mother Goose Stories** (producer)
- (1949) - **The Story of Little Red Riding Hood** (producer, animator)
- (1949) - **Mighty Joe Young** (first technician)
- (1951) - **Rapunzel** (producer)
- (1951) - **Hansel and Gretel** (producer)
- (1953) - **The Story of King Midas** (producer)
- (1954) - **The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms** (visual effects)
- (1955) - **It Came from Beneath the Sea** (visual effects)
- (1956) - **The Animal World** (effects technician)
- (1956) - **Earth vs. the Flying Saucers** (special photographic, animation effects)
- (1957) - **20 Million Miles to Earth** (visual effects)
- (1958) - **The 7th Voyage of Sinbad** (associate producer, visual effects)
- (1960) - **The 3 Worlds of Gulliver** (visual effects)
- (1961) - **Mysterious Island** (special visual effects)
- (1963) - **Jason and the Argonauts** (associate producer, visual effects)
- (1964) - **First Men in the Moon** (associate producer, visual effects)
- (1966) - **One Million Years B.C.** (special visual effects)
- (1969) - **The Valley of Gwangi** (associate producer, visual effects)
- (1974) - **The Golden Voyage of Sinbad** (producer, visual effects)
- (1977) - **Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger** (producer, visual effects)
- (1981) - **Clash of the Titans** (producer, visual effects)
- (2003) - **The Story of the Tortoise & the Hare** (director, co-producer, animator)
- (2007) - **Ray Harryhausen Presents: The Pit and the Pendulum** (executive producer)

